

IN THE CLAIMS

The pending claims are as follows. No amendments have been made.

1. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method for managing patent and trademark fees comprising:

inputting identification information for a patent or trademark matter of a client of a law firm and a requested fee associated with the matter for payment to an agency as data representing the identification information into a computer system;

deducting a charge for the requested fee against a client account maintained at least in part by an organization separate from the law firm for the client, the client account initially funded by the client such that the client account has a positive balance;

the organization generating a fee invoice to the law firm for the requested fee and transmitting the fee invoice to an accounting computer system used by the law firm;

generating a client invoice from the accounting computer system including a charge to the client for payment of the requested fee, wherein the payment of the requested fee is used to replenish the client account maintained by the organization, wherein the client invoice corresponds to the fee invoice to the law firm such that payment by the client to the law firm for the client invoice provides funds to replenish the client account; and

replenishing the client account with the funds collected from payment of the client invoice for the requested fee.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving notice of an event for the matter of the client of the firm that will require a second fee associated with the matter for payment to the agency by a due date; and

generating a second client invoice including a charge for the requested fee to pre-fund the client account maintained by the organization such that upon payment by the client prior to the due date the client account has a sufficient positive balance to cover the second fee.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the charge included on the second client invoice for the requested fee is less than the requested fee, the client account having a positive balance less than the requested fee.
4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein generating the second client invoice comprises generating the second client invoice at an accounting computer system of the firm.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein generating the second client invoice comprises:
 - generating the charge for the requested fee at a fee computer system of the organization;
 - transmitting data regarding the charge from the fee computer system to an accounting computer system of the firm; and
 - generating the second client invoice at the accounting computer system.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein receiving notice of the event comprises:
 - receiving notice of the event at an accounting computer system of the firm; and
 - transmitting data regarding the event from the accounting computer system to a fee computer system of the organization.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising tracking a payment made by the client as covering one of an already made charge for a requested fee associated with a matter for payment to the agency and a charge to be made for a requested fee associated with a matter for payment to the agency.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising issuing a refund to the client for regular payment made thereby for charges to be made requested fees associated with a matter for payment to the agency.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein payment made by the client comprises a charging of one of a credit card and a charge card of the client.
10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the charging is automatic.
11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card comprises one of a Visa card, a MasterCard card, an American Express card, an Optima card, and a Discover card.
12. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is sponsored by the organization.
13. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is issued by the organization.
14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
computing interest on a positive balance of the client account to be paid to the client;
determining whether on average the client account has a positive balance; and
upon determining that on average the client account has a positive balance, providing for no cost issuance of the charge for the requested fee for transmittal to the agency.
15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
transmitting electronically data representing first information regarding the charge for the requested fee from the computer system to a fee computer system maintained by the organization;
inputting second information regarding the charge received from an external source as data representing the second information into the fee computer system; and
reconciling electronically the data representing the first information regarding the charge with the data representing the second information regarding the charge at the fee computer system.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, further comprising:

generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer system and electronically transmitting the data representing the fee invoice to an accounting computer system maintained by the firm;

generating a firm invoice including the charge at the fee computer system for delivery to the firm; and

wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the organization for the firm invoice.

17. (Withdrawn) A computer-implemented method for managing patent and trademark fees comprising:

receiving notice of an event for a patent or trademark matter of a client of a law firm that will require a fee associated with the matter for payment to an agency by a due date; and

generating a client invoice including a charge for the requested fee to pre-fund the account maintained at least in part by an organization separate from the law firm such that upon payment by the client of the client invoice prior to the due date the account has a sufficient positive balance to cover the second fee.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the charge included on the second client invoice for the requested fee is less than the requested fee, the account having a positive balance less than the requested fee.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein generating the second client invoice comprises generating the second client invoice at an accounting computer system of the firm.

20. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein generating the second client invoice comprises:

generating the charge for the requested fee at a fee computer system of the organization;
transmitting data regarding the charge from the fee computer system to an accounting computer system of the firm; and
generating the second client invoice at the accounting computer system.

21. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein receiving notice of the event comprises:
receiving notice of the event at an accounting computer system of the firm; and
transmitting data regarding the event from the accounting computer system to a fee computer system of the organization.

22. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, further comprising:
computing interest on a positive balance of the account to be paid to the client;
determining whether on average the account has a positive balance; and
upon determining that on average the account has a positive balance, providing for no cost issuance of a charge for a requested fee for transmittal to the agency.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, further comprising tracking a payment made by the client as covering one of an already made charge for a requested fee associated with a matter for payment to the agency and a charge to be made for a requested fee associated with a matter for payment to the agency.

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 23, further comprising issuing a refund to the client for regular payment made thereby for charges to be made for the requested fees associated with a matter for payment to the agency.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein payment made by the client comprises a charging of one of a credit card and a charge card of the client.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 25, wherein the charging is automatic.
27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 25, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card comprises one of a Visa card, a MasterCard card, an American Express card, an Optima card, and a Discover card.
28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 25, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is sponsored by the organization.
29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 25, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is issued by the organization.
30. (Withdrawn) A computer-implemented method for managing patent and trademark fees comprising:
generating invoices for already made charges for requested fees for patent or trademark matters for transmittal to an agency for clients of a law firm, the charges payable against accounts maintained at least in part by an organization separate from the law firm, each account corresponding to a client;
generating invoices for charges to be made for requested fees for transmittal to the agency for clients of the law firm, the charges payable against the accounts maintained by the organization; and
tracking payments made by the clients as covering one of the already made charges and the charges to be made.
31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 30, further comprising issuing refunds to the clients for regular payment made thereby for the charges to be made for the requested fees associated with a matter for payment to the agency.
32. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 30, further comprising:

inputting identification information for a matter of a client of the firm and a requested fee associated with the matter for payment to the agency as data representing the identification information into a computer workstation;

issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation for transmittal to the agency, the charge payable against an account maintained by the organization separate from the firm;

transmitting electronically data representing first information regarding the charge for the requested fee from the computer workstation to a fee computer system maintained by the organization; and

inputting second information regarding the charge received from an external source as data representing the second information into the fee computer system.

33. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32, further comprising:

generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer workstation and electronically transmitting the data representing the fee invoice to an accounting computer system maintained by the firm;

generating a client invoice including the fee invoice at the accounting computer system for delivery to the client; and

generating a firm invoice including the charge at the fee computer system for delivery to the firm,

wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the organization for the firm invoice.

34. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 33, wherein generating data representing a fee invoice comprises assigning a unique tracking number for each charge issued by the organization to the agency for the client of the firm.

35. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 34, wherein generating the client invoice comprises including the unique tracking number for each charge issued on the client invoice, and generating the firm invoice comprises including the unique tracking number.
36. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 35, further comprising matching payments made by the client with the unique tracking numbers for the charges issued by the organization to the agency for the client to determine whether a given charge was prepaid by the client.
37. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 33, wherein payment made by the client comprises a charging of one of a credit card and a charge card of the client.
38. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 37, wherein the charging is automatic.
39. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 37, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card comprises one of a Visa card, a MasterCard card, an American Express card, an Optima card, and a Discover card.
40. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 37, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is sponsored by the organization.
41. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 37, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is issued by the organization.
42. (Withdrawn) A computer-implemented method for managing payables associated with clients of a law firm comprising:
inputting identification information for a patent or trademark matter of a client of a law firm and a requested fee associated with the matter for payment to a vendor as data representing the identification information into a computer workstation;

issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation for transmittal to the vendor, the charge payable against an account maintained at least in part by an organization separate from the firm;

transmitting electronically data representing first information regarding the charge for the requested fee from the computer workstation to a fee computer system maintained by the organization;

inputting second information regarding the charge received from an external source as data representing the second information into the fee computer system; and

reconciling electronically the data representing the first information regarding the charge with the data representing the second information regarding the charge at the fee computer system.

43. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 42, further comprising:

generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer workstation and electronically transmitting the data representing the fee invoice to an accounting computer system maintained by the firm;

generating a client invoice including the fee invoice at the accounting computer system for delivery to the client; and

generating a firm invoice including the charge at the fee computer system for delivery to the firm,

wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the organization for the firm invoice.

44. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 43, wherein payment made by the client comprises a charging of one of a credit card and a charge card of the client.

45. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the charging is automatic.

46. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card comprises one of a Visa card, a MasterCard card, an American Express card, an Optima card, and a Discover card.

47. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is sponsored by the organization.

48. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 44, wherein the one of the credit card and the charge card of the client is issued by the organization.